

September 30, 1998

Command Historian

Chief, Military Awards Branch
US Total Army Personnel Command
ATTN: TAPC-PDA
Alexandria, VA 22332-0471

I am pleased to report that we have concluded our two-year effort to identify Asian-American and Native American Pacific Islander soldiers who received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) in World War II under the provisions of Section 524, National Defense Authorization Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-106).

In the course of our research we identified 104 soldiers who were Asian-Americans, out of 4,434 American soldiers who received the DSC during the war. We forwarded the individual files as we completed each case. We identified 47 Japanese-Americans, one Chinese/Hawaiian-American, one Filipino-American, and one Korean-American. The total also includes 54 Filipinos who were nationals of the United States at the time.

We look forward to learning the final results of the review sometime next year, after the Senior Army Decorations Board has met and their recommendations have been reviewed by the Secretary of the Army, Secretary of Defense, and finally the President.

Preserving the heritage of America's Army means recognizing all its heroes, regardless of race, creed or national origin. In June 1996, the US Army Military Awards Branch requested research assistance from the US Army Center of Military History for this important review. The Center and the Army Historical Program play a vital role in preserving the Army's heritage and passing it on to new soldiers. The Center assigned the project to the Command Historian at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Presidio of Monterey, California.

The Command Historian, Dr. James C. McNaughton, assembled a team of researchers and support staff that included Dr.

Kristen E. Edwards, Dr. Jay M. Price, Mr. Scott D. Welch, Mr. William T. Bowers, and Mr. James L. Froelich. The Installation Commander, COL Daniel D. Devlin, and other supporting staff elements at the Presidio of Monterey provided invaluable support and assistance.

We also received valuable advice from members of the team who had conducted the earlier research into African-American soldiers in World War II, led by Dr. Daniel K. Gibran. The Military Awards Branch was a continual source of advice and support, including LTC Terry L. Mintz, MAJ Daniel B. Gibson, CW4 John Wendland, MSG Gary Soots and MSG Purcell.

The research challenges were substantial. The Army did not keep centralized awards records, and many personnel records were destroyed by a 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO. Countless Army records were lost in the fall of the Philippines. The starting point for our research was the list compiled by Albert F. Gleim and George B. Harris III, Distinguished Service Cross Awards for World War II (Planchet Press, 1991). We could not have completed our research without the courteous and professional assistance of archivists and staffers at the Center of Military History, National Archives, National Personnel Records Center, US Army Reserve Personnel Command, MacArthur Memorial, and many other libraries and research centers.

What did we find? We found that the Army accepted Asian-Americans into its ranks in World War II, when the other services were reluctant to do so. American society at the time was far from perfect, and the Army then, as now, was a reflection of that society. But the statistics tell an important tale. The 1940 census identified about 258,000 Asian-Americans living on the mainland and another 300,000 in Hawaii, including Native Hawaiians. Of these, almost 45,000 served during the war in the Army Ground Forces and Army Air Forces. In addition, over 100,000 Filipinos in the Philippines were called into the armed forces of the United States. Of the 294 US soldiers who were awarded the Medal of Honor,

two were Asian-American: Pfc. Sadao S. Munemori, a Japanese-American, and Sgt. Jose Calugas, a Philippine Scout.

Social and legal discrimination against Asian-Americans was widespread in American society in the 1940s. Nevertheless in the Army awards process we found no evidence of discrimination against Asian-Americans. We found no evidence that award recommendations were rejected or downgraded on the basis of race. Even in segregated units such as the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), white officers made sure that their Japanese-American soldiers received full recognition for valor. In the Pacific campaigns, General MacArthur awarded medals to Filipino and white soldiers alike.

Each group of Asian-American soldiers served in a different way. About 25,000 Japanese-Americans served during the war. In 1942 the Army formed the 100th Infantry Battalion, a segregated unit which entered combat in Italy in 1943. Within two months, Fifth Army awarded one of these soldiers the DSC. This unit was later joined by the 442nd RCT. Other Japanese-American soldiers served in the Military Intelligence Service, and one was awarded the DSC for heroism in 1944. Altogether, the Army awarded 47 DSCs and one Medal of Honor to soldiers of the 100th/442nd RCT, 46 to Japanese-Americans and one to a Korean-American.

In the Philippines more than 100,000 Filipinos served in the Philippine Army, which was then part of the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) under MacArthur. Another 12,000 served in the Philippine Scouts, which were part of the Regular Army. After the fall of Bataan, thousands more fought with the guerrilla forces. In the United States 12,000 Filipinos joined the Army, one of whom received the DSC. Altogether, the Army awarded Filipino soldiers 55 DSCs and one Medal of Honor.

About 13,000 Chinese-Americans served in the Army during the war. Several thousand of these served with the Army Air Forces in the China-Burma-India Theater in support units, but

most were scattered throughout the forces. One officer who was half-Chinese and half-Hawaiian received the DSC.

We also looked at soldiers from groups not as widely represented in the American population at the time, but found none who received the DSC. These soldiers included Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians. We found they received other combat decorations such as the Silver Star and Bronze Star Medal, but with the exceptions noted above, not the DSC.

The Army Air Forces were part of the Army at that time and awarded 745 DSCs, so we looked at Asian-Americans who served in the AAF as well. We found that over 5,000 Asian-Americans served, including the Chinese-American 14th Air Service Group. MacArthur awarded the DSC to three airmen in the Philippine Army Air Corps. The AAF awarded Asian-American airmen many other combat decorations such as the Distinguished Flying Cross and Silver Star, but except for these three awards, not the DSC.

Our research met with enthusiastic cooperation from veterans and community groups throughout the country. Dozens of veterans and ethnic publications ran stories about our research to help us "get the word out." Our research drew extensive media coverage, including stories in USA Today, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury-News, Honolulu Advertiser, Honolulu Star-Bulletin, and George Magazine. We anticipate that the final results will receive extensive media coverage.

The US Total Army Personnel Command provided \$455,000 in funding. Direct personnel costs amounted to \$345,000. The rest was divided among travel, contracts, and supplies and equipment. The Defense Language Institute provided additional support.

On July 15, 1946, in a White House ceremony President Truman awarded the 442nd RCT their seventh Presidential Unit Citation. He told the Japanese-American soldiers, "I can't tell you how much I appreciate the privilege of being able to

show you how much the United States of America thinks of what you have done." Our team members feel equally privileged to have worked on this important project. Truman went on to say, "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice -- and you won. Keep up that fight, and we will all continue to win."

America's Army will continue to win, as long as we have soldiers who, regardless of race, creed or national origin, distinguish themselves "conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty." We are honored to have played a small part in shedding new light on this inspiring chapter in the Army's history.

Sincerely,

James C. McNaughton
Command Historian